



ring-billed gull

Larus delawarensis

Kingdom:	Animalia
Division/Phylum:	Chordata - vertebrates
Class:	Aves
Order:	Charadriiformes
Family:	Laridae

Features

An adult ring-billed gull is 18 to 20 inches long. Its body is gray with long, wide wings. The legs and eyes are yellowish-green. There is a black ring around the tip of the yellow bill. The underside of the wing is black. The tail is squared.

Natural History

The ring-billed gull lives near lakes, rivers, dumps, flooded fields, airports, golf courses, and plowed fields. It eats a broad range of food including amphibians, insects, fish, garbage, and mollusks (snails, clams). It roosts on the water and flies out each day to feed in fields. It will drop a mollusk onto a bed of rocks to open the shell. This gull's call is a loud and high pitched "kee-ow, kee-ow." Fall migrants may be seen in Iowa as early as late June. Spring migrants begin returning to the state in February. Non breeders often are found on larger lakes and rivers. One nesting colony has been found in northwestern Iowa. Two to four buffy white eggs marked with brown

are laid. The ring-billed is the most familiar gull in Iowa. It is adaptable and thrives while living in close association with humans.

Habitats

Mississippi River; interior rivers and streams; natural lakes and prairie marshes; constructed lakes, ponds, and reservoirs

Iowa Status

common; native

Iowa Range

summer: scattered along the eastern edge of Iowa and Dickinson, Woodbury, and Fremont Counties; migrant: statewide

Bibliography

Iowa Department of Natural Resources. 2001. *Biodiversity of Iowa: Aquatic Habitats* CD-ROM.